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ABSTRACT

The Arizona Adult Literacy and Technology Resource Center and the University of Tennessee's Center for Literacy Studies undertook a collaborative project to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of regional sharing of resources and expertise in field of adult education and literacy education. The project's goals were as follows: involve a broad cross-section of the field in deliberating the feasibility and effectiveness of regional resource sharing; identify possible models, priorities, and funding mechanisms for regional resource sharing; and produce a report and action plan for next steps in planning and implementation. A national working group of 18 representatives of diverse sections of the field of adult education and literacy oversaw the planning process through 2 meetings and other communications between October 1995 and May 1996. On the basis of 82 responses to a survey of state literacy resource centers, adult basic education directors, other state-level organizations, and local programs, a blueprint was developed for sharing resources and expertise in adult education and literacy across state lines. Included in the blueprint are the following: guiding principles for alliances; recommendations regarding structuring and funding them; and an action plan for a developing and evaluating a trial alliance. (Case studies of three model regional alliances for excellence are included.) (MN)

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ED 396 167

# REGIONAL RESOURCE INITIATIVE

## A BLUEPRINT FOR SHARING RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE IN ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACROSS STATE LINES

BY
THE ARIZONA ADULT LITERACY AND TECHNOLOGY RESOURCE CENTER, INC.
AND
THE CENTER FOR LITERACY STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
FOR
THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY
WASHINGTON, DC

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JUNE 1996



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This publication has been made possible through a grant from the National Institute for Literacy to the Arizona Adult Literacy and Technology Resource Center, Inc. in cooperation with the Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee.

# Executive Summary

# Regional Resource Initiative:

## Executive Summary

A planning grant was awarded by the National Institute for Literacy to the Arizona Adult Literacy and Technology Resource Center, Inc., in collaboration with the Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of regional sharing of resources and expertise in the field of adult education and literacy.

### Goals

- Involve a broad cross-section of the field in deliberating the feasibility and effectiveness of regional resource sharing.
- Identify possible models for regional resource sharing.
- Identify potential priority areas for regional resource sharing.
- Identify possible funding mechanisms.
- Produce a report and an action plan for next steps in planning and implementation.

A **National Working Group** composed of eighteen members representing diverse sections of the field oversaw the planning process through two meetings and other communications during the project period, October 1995 - May 1996.

A Survey of the Field resulted in eighty-two responses from State Literacy Resource Centers, Adult Basic Education directors, other state level organizations, and local programs. From previous experiences with multi-state initiatives, the respondents recommended that special attention be paid to *equity issues, decision-making issues, communication issues, logistical difficulties, and political support and funding*. When identifying resource needs in individual states which could potentially be met on a regional level, over fifty percent of respondents named *special training, information, action research/inquiry, linking SLRCs, and training and technical assistance in program evaluation*. Fifty-one percent of respondents favored trying pilot projects based on both geographic regions and theme-based projects.

**The Mission:** Individual states have a need for services, knowledge, and expertise across a wide range of program functions. Therefore, it is proposed that regional specialized resource centers, which the Work Group agreed would be named "Alliances for Excellence," could provide a means for sharing resources while also being economically efficient. "RRI partnerships will create a mechanism to help translate national issues into state and local adult education strategies through:

- providing a means for sharing resources/sharing information and services among the partners
- developing innovative initiatives which improve the quality of services for adult learners
- broadening the resource base and bringing new players into funding and implementation."

**The Vision:** The basic skills and educational needs of adults in their roles as parents, workers, and citizens will be met by a high quality delivery system. The Regional Resource Initiative will initiate and support collaborative partnerships that build on existing strengths to continuously improve the capacity of the field to meet the needs of adult learners.

**Vision particulars:**

- Building capacity of the field to meet needs for adult learners
- Broadening the role of literacy in our changing world
- Tying adult literacy to national issues and contex



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# Alliances for Excellence

## Guiding Principles

- Prioritize and focus activities
- Build on existing strengths
- Add value, not cost
- Be flexible and sensitive to local and state needs
- Build in communication channels
- Use technology to reach customers when feasible
- Build in clear lines of accountability
- Build in performance measures
- Commit to collaboration(s) with other resource providers at local, state and national levels
- Establish measures to ensure equity
- Make decision making processes clear
- Fund for success
- Learn from experiences of existing models
- Think regionally / act locally
- Be customer driven

## Assumptions/Structure:

- Functional in nature vs. organizational
- Come from existing entities
- Demonstrate collaboration and coordination
- Proven track record in content area
- Customer driven accountability
- NIFL will coordinate Alliances
- NIFL will market Alliances nationally
- Coordination on all levels
- Three to five year funding
- Self sustaining after five years
- Functions are both geographic / nongeographic
- Advisory Board
- Can be one or more agencies

## Recommendations

- The new Alliances for Excellence should be funded by the National Inistitute for Literacy, U.S. Department of Education, private foundations, and / or other sources and placed in existing resource centers / agencies.
- Content and focus of programs should be driven by the needs of the collaborating states.
- Successful collaboration must be required and demonstrated.
- Marketing of the plan should be done for different groups such as practitioners and potential funders.
- Core funding should be provided for three to five years, after which projects should be self sustaining.
- NIFL should hire a coordinator for the Institute's staff, for the planning and development phase of the project.
- A coordinating committee representing the field should oversee the project.

Collaboration: The success of Alliances will depend in large measure on the presence of truly collaborative efforts among partners. Much of the success of collaboration results from upfront action and commitment.

Leadership and Coordination: There is a need to create public awareness of Alliances for Excellence to attract potential applicants. We need different marketing strategies for different groups, e.g. potential funders and practitioners. The coordinating committee members will market the concept to the field. It is advised that a marketing expert be hired.

Content: The resource needs of the particular group which comes together should define whether a regional approach is more effective. The particular content and scope of work of a regional alliance should demonstrate that a regional approach would be more effective than individual states working alone.

**FUNDING:** Core funding for projects per year is proposed at $300,000. Projects would likely receive $50,000 to $100,000 each. Each project becomes self sustaining within five years. Strategic planning for financial resource development is required. The funding source will shape the project.
**CRITERIA FOR SELECTION:** A Center / Alliance of Excellence should demonstrate measurable impact, a documented need, regional collaboration, applicability outside RRI. Grants should not go to projects which only affect small communities.

## ACTION PLAN

The work of the RRI Planning Committee ends with this report and its recommendation that Alliances for Excellence be funded for a trial period during which their effectiveness could be measured and plans could be made to extend them on an on-going basis.

The RRI planning committee will:

- Prepare a draft report based on two meetings and survey information.
- Circulate the report to the work group for approval.
- Submit a final report to the National Institute for Literacy and the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, US Department of Education, and disseminate it to the field.

This report will include results of surveys, proceedings of meetings, recommendations and abstracts of sample alliances. The report will also include a description of Alliances for Excellence that the Institute can use to describe and publicize Alliances.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY WILL:

- Enter into a developmental phase of Alliances for Excellence during which the concept of Alliances can be developed further and a small number of Alliances can be funded experimentally. This developmental phase will be time bound, involving only a small number of Alliances. At the end of the developmental phase, NIFL will make recommendations regarding continuation of the Alliances for Excellence effort.
- Work with an advisory subcommittee of the RRI work group during the developmental phase.
- Secure funding for the developmental phase of Alliances for Excellence. Potential funding sources to be explored include NIFL, U.S. Department of Education, private foundations.
- Contract with a consultant to coordinate the developmental phase of Alliances of Excellence, who will:
- Clarify the description and purpose of Alliances, using this report to further refine the Alliance for Excellence proposal.
- Create a marketing plan for Alliances for Excellence, including elements described in this report, that can be used in publicizing and seeking funding for the Alliances for Excellence.
- Write an RFP based on this report that can be used to award the prototype Alliances for Excellence grants.
- Design a plan for funding Alliances for Excellence. Include commitments for federal support, researched foundation prospects, fund raising strategies.

Throughout the developmental phase, NIFL, the advisory subcommittee, and the consultant will seek counsel from work group members, significant organizations with an interest in adult education (including, but not limited to: NAEPDC, LLA, LVA, SLRCs, CAEL, ACBE, World Education).

# Regional Resource Initiative Work Group

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# PREFACE

## Regional Resource Initiative Phase One Planning Process

In September 1995, the National Institute for Literacy, Washington DC awarded a planning grant for the Regional Resource Initiative to the Arizona Adult Literacy and Technology Resource Center, Inc., Phoenix, AZ in collaboration with the Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

In a context in which federal funds are shrinking, and SLRCs may not continue as a national system, it is becoming crucial for the field to use its resources to maximum effect. Within a geographical region, there may be multiple areas in which resources could be shared across state lines. Resources could also potentially be shared among states which are not geographically contiguous, but which face common problems. The six month RRI planning process convened a national Working Group with broad representation from the field to explore both the possible structure and content for such resource sharing. The Working Group included representatives of SLRCs, state directors of adult education, Governor's contacts, non-profit and volunteer organizations and others.

Crucial questions involve both the content and structure for such regional resource sharing. What resources are available and suitable for sharing across state lines? How can structure be developed which facilitates such sharing with a minimum of overhead costs? How might proposals be developed for national and state government sources, for private foundation/corporate sources, and/or fees for service?

GOALS OF THE PLANNING PROCESS WERE TO:

1. Involve a broad cross-section of the field in deliberating the feasibility and effectiveness of regional resource sharing.
2. Identify possible models for regional resource sharing (including researching experiences in related fields, e.g. consortia for professional development in K-12 school systems), their applicability to adult education and literacy.
3. Identify potential priority areas for regional resource sharing.
4. Identify possible funding mechanisms (including federal and state government funding, foundation and corporate funding, fee-for-service, membership fees and others).
5. Produce a report and an action plan for next steps in planning and implementation.

NATIONAL WORKING GROUP: An eighteen member team with diverse representation from the field of adult education and literacy across the country formed the Working Group. They were to oversee the planning process through two meetings and other communications between meetings.

RESEARCH: The project looked for broad input from the field by a variety of means, and was synthesized and reported to the Working Group:

- A survey of State Literacy Resource Centers to ascertain which SLRCs are still operating, following federal funding cuts, and what are their primary functions.
- A survey of practitioners to identify key needs for resource and support, including staff development, technology assistance, access to materials and other areas. [This survey was basically a modified Delphi method, similar to that recently used to identify research priorities by the System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES).]

- Telephone interviews with SLRC directors and State Directors in each region, along with a small sample of local program directors (names suggested by State Directors and SLRC Directors).
- Research on possible models for regional resource sharing was conducted through a literature review and telephone conversations with resource people.

**Action Plan and Report:** The action plan was developed by the Working Group at its March meeting. It was submitted to NIFL, along with a summary of research finding from the field and from the review of possible models, May 31, 1996, and made available to the field by July, 1996.

**Staffing:** The planning process was jointly coordinated by Maureen Ambrose, Executive Director of the Arizona Adult Literacy and Technology Resource Center, Inc. (AALTRC), and by Juliet Merrifield, Director of the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee (the Tennessee Literacy Resource Center). Maureen Ambrose's responsibilities were for administration and reporting to the National Institute for Literacy, for coordination and logistics of the western meeting of the Working Group, and overseeing the production of the Report. Juliet Merrifield's responsibilities were for facilitation of the planning process, coordination of the research component (input from the field and review of possible models), and contributing information for the final report. In addition, three SLRC directors received a small stipend to assist in gathering input from the field in their own regions and reporting to the Working Group.

**Timeline:** This project began in October 1995 and concluded in June 1996. The first Working Group meeting took place in late January and the second Working Group meeting was held in March 1996. Research was conducted from October through March, and input from the field was gathered in January and February 1996.

**Appreciation:** Recognition is due to Juliet Merrifield and Jean Stephens for their leadership and vision in spearheading this project, also to Maureen Ambrose in concert with the core work group for meeting planning and Report development,and her staff, Miriam Kroeger for fiscal administration of the grant, and Michelle Cabrales for desktop publishing. Gratitude is due in no small part to Virginia Watson, Silja Kallenbach, Mary Dunn Siedow, Juliet Merrifield and Jean Stephens for facilitating work group sessions, project planning, and editing this report. Special thanks is due to Andy Hartman, George Spicely, and Jim Bowling for their legislative and national perspectives.

JANUARY 7-9, 1996 NASHVILLE

## RRI WORKING GROUP AGENDA

Objectives:

1. Reach a common understanding of our purpose
2. Identify issues and questions to be addressed in planning
3. Refine the work plan (gathering input from the field, researching models)

### DAY ONE:

**Introductory session**

- Welcome and Introductions
- What the future holds
- The RRI project and the Working Group: purpose, project tasks, Working Group responsibilities
- Report on SLRC survey results and discussion
- Identify barriers and advantages of regional resource sharing

### DAY TWO:

**What would we want from a Regional Resource Initiative?**

- What are the kinds of resource needs which could potentially be met on a regional basis (in contrast with those needs which must be met locally or in-state)?
- What are guidelines for how regional resources should be delivered?

**Review potential models for regional resource sharing**

- Discussion of the applications from other models for our own purposes?

**Addressing the issues**

- Small groups work on the issues and concerns identified, and outline next steps to be taken to address them.
- Report back from groups, discussion
- Recap the priorities we have set over the two days of discussion

**Gathering input to the planning process**

- Who are key people for gathering input? Should there be a survey of the field?
- What are the key questions to ask?
- The process, timeline

**Refining the work plan**

- Major tasks to be accomplished
- Clarify roles and responsibilities to getting tasks done
- Final business session

# REGIONAL RESOURCE INITIATIVE

## Summary Notes: Working Group Meeting January 7 - 9, 1996

The first meeting of the RRI Working Group was held in Nashville, TN, from January 7-9, 1996, during the "Blizzard of 96." Twelve of the projected 16 participants were able to attend. The objectives of the meeting were:

1. To reach a common understanding of our purpose;
2. To identify issues and questions to be addressed in planning;
3. To refine the workplan.

### CONTEXT - WHY WE ARE HERE

Jim Bowling, Chair of the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, reminded us of the uncertain status of legislation governing the field. Two concerns emerge as key for our project: there will be less federal funding for adult basic education; and, since block grants shift control to the state level, there will be even greater variation between states, and even less of a national system then now. SLRCs may or may not continue to exist in every state. The Senate version of the bill now in conference committee does fund SLRCs over and above the state basic grant. The House version does not. The National Coalition on Literacy is recommending that Congress recede to the Senate on this issue, but the outcome is still uncertain, and likely to remain so for some time. Given this context, we are wise to seek ways of maximizing limited resources, and to consider collaborative inter-state activity.

### STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Among the potential strengths of regional collaboration are:

- the strength of collaboration -- the whole is greater that the sum of its parts;
- economies of scale -- eliminating certain areas of duplication, not reinventing the wheel,
- expanding the resource base;
- ability to overcome barriers

Among the potential barriers are:

- turfism
- funding and institutional barriers
- logistics, especially in reaching local practitioners
- getting agreement on priorities may be difficult

"Regions" do not have to be geographical. Using technology we can create groups which share common interests and concerns but are geographically distant (for example, group of states with

large ESL needs could collaborate -- like California, Texas, Massachusetts, Florida, New York). We also agreed that everyone does not have to be ready to start regional resource sharing at the same time -- start with whomever is ready, and develop learning which others can benefit from later.

## Guiding Principles

We began to draft some guiding principles for regional resource efforts. Among those on which there was widespread agreement are:

- Prioritize and focus activities (don't be all things to all people)
- Don't reinvent the wheel - build on existing strengths
- Add value, not cost (i.e., accessing a resource at the regional level should not be more expensive for a state than accessing it within the state)
- Be flexible, sensitive to local and state needs
- Build in communication channels (use technology to reach customers)
- Build in clear lines of accountability and methods of demonstrating performance
- Network with other resource providers at state, regional and national levels

## Resource Needs

The survey of SLRCs identified a number of resource needs which could potentially be met at a regional level, and in our discussions we identified additional areas. However, we agreed that the needs must be identified by the field, and must be done from the bottom up. Possible examples:

- Training, materials and support in program management
- Leadership development, especially at the program and state levels
- Training, materials and support in developing collaborations
- Training and materials in special topic areas, like workplace literacy, ESL
- Supporting longer-term projects in which practitioners collaborate over time on areas of focus, like the Adult Numeracy Practitioners Network
- Training and support for technology applications
- Providing information resources
- Distance learning projects

## Potential Funding Sources

The Working Group identified a number of potential funding sources which could support the development of regional resource sharing. We recommend an attempt to develop a diversified funding base, which could include:

- federal funding (from NIFL, OVAE, other federal agencies)
- state funding (on a fee-for-service or membership basis)
- regional commissions and other quasi-government groups
- foundation funding (supporting a system of resources, not just individual projects)
- corporate funding (especially if we can relate activities to business area)

## Action Plan Development

The work of the RRI Planning Committee includes recommendations that Alliances for Excellence be funded for a trial period during which their effectiveness could be measured and plans could be made to extend them on an on-going basis.

The RRI planning committee will:

- Prepare a draft report based on two meetings and survey information.
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## State Literacy Resource Center

## Initial Survey November 1995

A short survey questionnaire was developed by the Regional Resource Initiative coordinators and distributed to all SLRCs in November, 1995 to ascertain which SLRCs were still open for business, how their funding looks for this year and next, what their major areas of work are, as well as to gain their comments on the idea of regional sharing of resources.

Thirty-nine SLRCs responded to the survey. It is possible that some of the non-respondents have in fact closed, although we do not think so. The process of establishing regional technology hubs in three of the four national regions (all except the northeast) has facilitated contacts between SLRCs in these regions, and we do not know of other SLRCs which have closed. The survey presents a picture of where SLRCs in general are, and how they respond to the Regional Resource Initiative.

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Total Responses: 39

1. Is your State Literacy Resource Center still open for business?
   Most SLRCs are still open for business, despite the ending of federal funding for them this year.
   - Only three SLRCs we heard from have closed (New Hampshire, West Virginia and New York), and we know of one other closing (Florida).

2/3. What funding do you have for the 1995-96 fiscal year? And what are your current sources?
   - Only 18 of the respondents are fully funded for the current year, the rest are only partially funded.
   - Most SLRCs are heavily dependent on carry forward funds from the previous fiscal year (29 of the 39 respondents).
   - 22 SLRCs are receiving 353 funding from their state ABE departments (which will end with the new legislation).
   - Only 15 SLRCs are receiving other state funding in the current year.
   - 13 SLRCs are receiving grants and contracts funding.
   - Other sources of funding identified are:
     Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Grants-Corp, Foundation, Vermont Literacy Board, office of the courts, Friends of AALTRC campaign, Department of Corrections, Sundt Corporation, Department of Defense, Fees for Services, State Subsidy of AE, NIFL Standards Grant, Wis. Tech. Col. Sys., Matching funds, SEA'S IN MA, ME,VH,CT,RI,VT, World Education, Lsca-title I funds, state match for SLRC funding, Adult Ed. Utah State Office of Ed. to pay secretary, NIFL, IASD NIFL grant, Secretary of State Lit. Off., DSS (EDGE), DOE, ISP(labor), ORI(refugees & Immigrants), NIFL, CDC(Heal Project), MCET (Education Telecommunications), Legislative appropriation through State Library, Adult Education

4. What is your best guess about funding for 1996-97?
   The prospects for the next fiscal year seem insecure.
   - Only 7 SLRCs expect to be fully funded for 1996-97 (Arkansas, Minnesota, DC, Michigan, Montana, Utah, Massachusetts).
   - 19 SLRCs expect to get partial funding.
   - 10 are doubtful about their funding for next year, and without congressional action, two more expect to close (in addition to those already closed) — Rhode Island and Oklahoma.

5. What are your primary activities as a SLRC?
   Among the SLRCs who responded to the survey:
   - 38 are engaged in literacy information and materials dissemination

- 38 are promoting coordination and collaboration among literacy providers
- Most (33) also provide training and 35 provide technical assistance to the field
- 22 provide policy assistance to government officials
- 20 work with the private sector to promote literacy
- Other activities include technology support and training, training of trainers, research (including action research with practitioners), referrals, distance education, student leadership support.

6. Do you have restrictions on working across state lines (e.g. in your governance structure)?
   Yes **3** No **25** Don't know **7**

7. The Regional Resource Initiative will be exploring issues and models for sharing of expertise and resources across state lines. Are you interested in these discussions, and would you like to be kept informed?
   Yes **36** No **0** **NA 3**

8. Any initial thoughts to provide the Working Group about regional resource sharing? What might be the prime resource needs in your state? What expertise would you be willing to/able to share with others? Your comments and ideas are welcome.
   All the SLRCs responding were interested in the Regional Resource Initiative. They identified a number of areas in which resources are needed:

   **Training**:
   - an easily accessible database of trainers available within a region;
   - training of trainers, especially in the area of technology;
   - cross-agency staff development;
   - training/staff development opportunities for ABE teachers;
   - training and curriculum development in special areas, including ESL, numeracy, workplace literacy, learning disabilities, family literacy.

   **Information**:
   - access to information, materials, and current research on innovative practices, best practices;
   - linking SLRCs to share information and learning
   - conducting action research and inquiry projects with practitioners.

   **Other:**
   - distance learning (models, helping set up sites)
   - program evaluation
   - accessing materials in Spanish

The SLRCs also identified specific areas in which they have expertise and resources which they could share across state lines:

**Training**:
- trainers available in a variety of areas including technology, workplace literacy, family literacy, learning disabilities, corrections education, program management, learner assessment, student leadership development, performance assessment, technology;
- training of trainers
- inter-agency staff development

**Information and technical assistance**:
- research and development resources and experience
- implementing online public access catalog
- implementing collaborative, "field-driven" training and technical assistance
- experience in action research and teacher inquiry
- resource materials

**Curricula**:

- development of field-generated teaching materials
- train the trainer curriculum
- various existing curricula are available to share

**Program development**:

- alternative assessment
- distance learning
- technology resources
- program management and performance accountability.

It appears that the resources offered for sharing match very well the resource needs identified by SLRCs for their own states. However, the geographical spread of the resources available may not match the resources needed. This will need additional analysis. Several rural states were particularly interested in a collaborative approach to distance learning using technology.

# Comments on Regional Resource Sharing

| State | Resources Needed | Expertise/Resources to Share |
|---|---|---|
| AR | The limitations I expect from our state are merely common sense issues. Where we can show reciprocation of services or resources, these should be no problem. | We have expertise in work-based education and learning disabilities staff development programs. |
| AZ | We are interested in assistance with distance learning through model programs and effective practices. | Regional resource sharing appears to be a wise idea given the funding issues facing SLRCs. AZ is a leader in the delivery of professional development, also instructional technology assistance for data collection and retrieval. We routinely offer inservices in ESOL, ABE/GED, Workforce/Workplace Literacy, Family Literacy, Corrections Education, Learning Disabilities, GED on TV, inter and intra agency collaboration, Assessment, partnerhips with bsiness and industry, etc. We are often asked to share in these areas. |
| DC | Developing an accessible database of trainers available for professional development activities with a given region. There seems to be a large gap between/among SLRC's in terms of technological knowledge and abilities. Various levels of training are necessary to help bring everyone "up to speed". | |
| IL | We're extremely interested in more comprehensive training in the areas of technology, family literacy, and learning disabilities or difference. | It's through such regional resource sharing that we'll be able to still be involved in SLRC functions even if the State Board of Education becomes the agency operating Illinois state resource center. Resource sharing will also be a means for the Literacy Office to put its own state resource into training and staff development.<br>Our expertise would be in workplace literacy and family literacy institutes to train practitioners. Within a year that expertise will expand to technology and learning disabilties. |
| KS | We are very interested in establishing a more comprehensive "distance link" (technological link) since we are a large, extremely rural state with many small programs with very limited resources for professional development, technological suport, etc. | Kansas is very involved in the adults with learning disabilities issue. |
| KY | English as a Second Language, Teaching Techniques, Workplace Literacy Curriculum, Action Research | Student writings & leadership; council (board) development at local level; management of volunteer literacy organizations, workplace literacy; family literacy program development; interagency performance measurement initiative. |

# Comments on Regional Resource Sharing

| State | Resources Needed | Expertise/Resources to Share |
|---|---|---|
| MA | - Linking in states doing teacher inquiry.<br>- Sharing (in depth, not superficial) re: helping programs and ourselves deal with the current turbulent, changing environment. | - Integrated staff and program development.<br>- Implementing broad, collaborative, "field-driven", training and technical assistance, initiatives.<br>- Strengths in teacher inquiry, math, health and literacy, field-generated materials development, alt. assessment. |
| MI | - Collaborative projects in teacher/provider research<br>- Collaborative granstmanship<br>- Regional conferencing | Publishing (professional journal), teacher research, marketing, interactive television and its' utilization; statewide programs management and strategic planning. |
| MN | I am excited by the prospect of being able to share resources amongst each other. We can use help with distance learning (models for delivery, actual set-up of sites). | Help others as much as possible with technology assistance and library set-up. However, it is only me right now holding down the fort in MN, and my ability to travel on our budget is often limited. |
| MO | - Workplace<br>- LD Studies/Student Assessment/Program Evaluation<br>- Technology | - Family Literacy |
| MS | - Learning Disabilities Training<br>- Money to maintain sufficient staff | - Curricula that has been developed for the Interagency staff development system by utilizing the Train-the-Trainer model.<br>- Workplace job specific literacy curricula gathered from across our state.<br>- Resource Materials from the Library can be shared. |
| NC | Opportunities for regional collaboration. | Applications of technology for literacy instruction. |
| NE | Such resource sharing would be very helpful to us here in Nebraska. Our primary resource needs right now involve family and workplace literacy, and capacity building. Mostly, we need staff development resources (resource people) in these areas. | Our own areas of expertise are broad, and focus largely on research and development; we have a strong capacity to do practice-based projects here. We also developed some expertise in teaching and learning, and in the development and implementation of integrated curriculum. We'd be happy to share our experience in these areas with others! |
| NJ | Resource needs include information and access to current research related to adult education and literacy, innovative practices and programs, and the range and diverstiy of staff development activities occuring regionally and nationally. | NJ has a well organized comprehensive staff development and technical assistance system. Extensive experience in needs assessment, conference/seminar/workshop planning, evaluation and self assessment techniques, and alternative assessment and student evaluation. Also, a file of experienced workshop presenters with expertise in a wide range of topics: ESL, Writing Skills Development, Holistic Scoring, Educational Leadership, Classroom Management, etc. On site and at two satellite locations, extensive collections of current adult ed. instructional materials. The SLRC has expertise in facilitation and collaborative/cooperative ventures. The governmental relations arm of the SLRC in NJ State Employment and Training Commission (SETC). The SETC is in fact, NJ Human Development Council. It consists of representatives from all departments of state and 50% of its members represent business, industry and labor organizations. |

# Comments on Regional Resource Sharing

| State | Resources Needed | Expertise/Resources to Share |
|---|---|---|
| NM | The New Mexico Literacy Resource Center has a number of special needs which can probably only be addressed locally, space is a key need at present. | Regional resource sharing might include collaboration on publications, and efforts to expand the use of technology among local programs. |
| OH | Workplace Literacy, Learning Disabilities and ESL | Family Literacy, Adult Numeracy, Technology, Leadership, Local Collaboration and Literacy |
| OK | Need funds for specific projects for on-line training. | |
| OR | Financial support | How to organize and implement a regional initiative. |
| PR | Our primary resource needs are literacy materials for spanish speakers since our literacy courses are all in spanish. | |
| SD | Local access to technology for use in searching for materials and their availability for loan and the use of technology as a learning tool. With South Dakota being a rural state this is a real issue. | SDSLRA has some knowledge in assisting with the implementation of a state on-line public access catalog. |
| TN | ESL, Numeracy, Workplace | Technology training & support<br>Staff Development, specifically: Training of trainers, Learner Centered Education, Adults with learning difficulties, Action research. |
| UT | Functional, tried-and-tested curricula & assessment tool in multiple media environments. Scoped and sequenced, competency based, preferably open/entry/exit. | Vendor contacts (established). Up-and-coming curriculum. Expertise in some content area. |
| VT | We need staff development for Adult Basic Education staff and cross agency staff development (corrections, family literacy, schools, etc.). | |
| WI | Resource needs: Easy access to research & best practices | We have the capacity to provide easy access to individuals throughout Wisconsin with particular Literacy related expertise. |
| WV | | We are currently in the first year of a 5 year L.D. Teacher Training Plan. This started with a 2 year 353 Project, so we have a great deal of information to share about L.D. |

# Regional Resource Initiative
# Survey of the Field January 1996

The Regional Resource Initiative Working Group developed a survey to invite responses from the field to ideas about regional resource sharing. The questionnaire was distributed to the following:

- All State Directors of Adult Basic Education (ABE)
- All Directors of State Literacy Resource Centers (SLRCs)
- Directors of state and other affiliates of Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) and Laubach Literacy Action (LLA)
- Subscribers to the NLA and SLRC listservs
- Some original recipients of the survey in turn distributed it to others.

In all, 82 responses were received, which in this report are grouped as follows:

- SLRCs, twenty-seven in total
- ABE (directors or other staff), twenty-two in total
- Other state level organizations, thirteen in total
- Local programs/teachers and others, twenty in total (sixteen of these from Kentucky)

## RRI survey responses:

### Experience with multi-state initiatives

A surprising number of respondents (forty-four) said they had prior experience with multi-state initiatives (some more than one), including the existing regional Literacy Resource Centers (New England and North-West), the NIFL Technology Hubs and other initiatives. Seventeen of the SLRCs, fourteen ABE departments, nine other state organizations and only 4 local organizations had experience of multi-state initiatives (which testifies to the difficulties facing multi-state initiatives in reaching local levels). Generally, their experience with these initiatives had been positive.

*It's hard work — but it pays off [ABE]*

*This center is one of the best efforts in staff development in the past twenty years. It really works with and for practitioners. [ABE]*

*We learned that resource sharing works! We learned that utilizing professional expertise and technical assistance works! [Other state]*

| Experience with Multi-State Initiatives | SLRCs | ABE Dir | Other/st | Other/loc | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Crossroads Cafe | 3 | 1 | | 1 | 5 (6%) |
| NCFL Building Alliances in Family Literacy | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 (7%) |
| NAB Technical Assistance in Workplace Literacy | 2 | | | 1 | 3 (4%) |
| Library of Congress/Headstart Family Literacy Initiative | 1 | | | | 1 (1%) |
| Other: (e.g. NELRC, Appalachian Teacher Exchange, NIFL Technology Hubs, Others) | 13 | 12 | 9 | 1 | 35 (43%) |
| TOTAL | 27 | 22 | 13 | 20 | 82 (100%) |

*New England states speaking with unified voice more powerful than individual states. Able to send targeted messages. Provided support and technical assistance. [Other state]*

*We participated in regional planning and visiting sites three or four years ago. It was interesting and encouraging. __ state people couldn't travel out of state! [Other local]*

Many people gave thoughtful comments highlighting lessons learned from those experiences, and issues from which RRI should learn. Primary issues to which RRI planners should pay attention include:

- **Equity issues** — how to deliver services fairly and equitably over a large geographic region, especially when states may contribute unequal funding;
- **Decision-making issues** — concern that it be participatory, fair, clear, and that it deal with the diversity of concerns and needs within and between states;
- **Communication issues** — respondents noted that much communication is needed to make the arrangement work, that there needs to be clear agreement on common language, on common values and goals/objectives, and on how decisions will be made;
- **Logistical difficulties** — time/distance needed for travel, problems with getting practitioners to travel for training, often compounded by state restrictions on out-of-state travel, how to reach grassroots practitioners from a distance;
- **Political support and funding** — regional efforts need high-level political support, and need adequate funding to be successful.

### *Equity issues*

*Impact across six states is difficult to see and measure. Individuals states' commitments go up and down. Unwillingness of some states to "trust" a regional effort, feel they are getting their fair share. etc. States that invest little get little in return, and then are not sure they are benefitting. [SLRC]*

*Lots of turf issues in set-up, lop-sided services due to disparities in funding. [SLRC]*

### *Decision-making issues*

*The collaborative project should be specific, clearly defined, agreed upon by all participants/stakeholders; bring added value. Our best projects have been ones that individual states would not have carried out (or even conceived of) on their own. [SLRC]*

*It's hard to do multi-state sharing. State bureaucracies, lines dividing public and private agencies, tendency to "hold on" to your own staff — all these get in the way of sharing. If these are to be successful multi-state initiatives, must value everyone's contributions and share responsibilities equitably. [SLRC]*

### *Communication issues*

*Collaborative endeavors involving several states require one, a great deal of communication; two, open minds/attitudes on the part of participants; three, participatory decision-making; four, good knowledge of state needs, strengths and weaknesses of states' available service delivery systems for literacy and adult ed. [SLRC]*

*Communication on a regional level is difficult and it's very important to work out regional goals before implementation, and a work plan (at least for the first year). [ABE]*

### *Logistical difficulties*

*It is difficult to ensure participation at regional training event by out-of-state practitioners. [Other state]*

*Distances/time for travel. Conflicting state rules etc. In spite of difficulties it was a wonderful experience meeting/working with talented and dedicated practitioners. [Other state]*

### *Political support and funding*

*Difficult to sustain on a long-term basis; priorities are usually not consistent. Better when a neutral agency provides services to and for states, i.e. Northeast Regional Resource Center. [ABE]*

*To members all needs are local. Hard to secure investment of $$ in non-direct services in face of drastic funding reductions. [ABE]*

## Resource needs

We asked respondents to tell us about resource needs which exist in their state and which potentially could be met on a regional level. A large majority of respondents in all categories thought that training needs could be met regionally, in particular special needs training and training-of-trainers. Training was a particular focus of SLRCs, state and local organizations. Information was another widely shared need, identified by almost three-quarters of all respondents. Action research/inquiry and linking SLRCs to share information and learning were also identified by a majority of respondents overall, and as might be expected, linking SLRCs was especially important to SLRC directors. Distance education was an area of interest to a majority of respondents, and this was especially so for respondents in large, rural states.

| | SLRCs | ABE Dir | Other/st | Other/loc | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Training (special) | 25 | 14 | 11 | 15 | 65 (79%) |
| Information | 23 | 14 | 9 | 13 | 59 (72%) |
| Action Research/Inquiry | 18 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 42 (51%) |
| Linking SLRCs | 26 | 15 | 7 | 10 | 58 (71%) |
| Training and TA in Program Evaluation | 16 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 42 (51%) |
| Other (see list) | 8 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 31 (38%) |
| TOTAL RESPONDENTS | 27 | 22 | 13 | 20 | 82 (100%) |

Respondents had a variety of other ideas of resource needs which could be met regionally, including:

- Documenting best practices
- Compiling and disseminating teacher or locally-generated materials
- Teacher exchanges
- Policy coordination
- Advocacy and public awareness/education
- Evaluation of professional development
- Program design (including training and technical assistance)
- Training and support on fund-raising activities was mentioned by several local and state non-profit organizations as an additional resource need.

## What would it take?

We asked respondents to tell us what it would take for the RRI idea to be successful and sustainable. Their open-ended responses identify several crucial factors for such a regional initiative to work in their states:

- **Funding** — the number one issue for most people, who want to see something that is cost-effective and affordable;
- **Support and commitment from key players** — these were identified as DAEL, NIFL, and the lead agency/ies in the state;
- **Accountability**;
- **Convenient access to services** — which are not otherwise available.

## MEET REAL NEEDS

*To be sustainable, project should address broad goals useful to various adult practitioners: community colleges, school districts, LVA, Laubach. [ABE]*

When we asked who needs to be involved, a very wide variety of agencies and organizations were listed. Clearly, each state differs in its composition of key stakeholders, and each project would probably have different partners. It is clear that the field is already oriented to inter-agency work, although the full range of potential future partners is still unclear. Most people still mentioned the traditional "literacy" players of state ABE director, SLRC, state volunteer literacy organizations and so on.

We asked what upfront commitments would need to be made, and again there was a variety of answers. While funding is probably the main concern, full participation and commitment of time and effort of key players, and upfront agreements on the nature of the work to be done are also regarded as vital.

*Each location included in management decisions, appropriate funding. [SLRC]*

*Up front commitments must include a willingness to contribute funds each year and time granted to people to participate on boards, study groups, etc. People who make decisions on funding must be involved — i.e. the state directors of adult education, or, as we move into "block" grants, whoever becomes responsible for administering the "block." You must understand there will be tension, if these people are not involved since we are always dealing with choices between spending limited funds "in-state" versus "out-of-state" especially if local program staff do not constantly see benefits, strongly and directly, from regional efforts. [ABE]*

## PAYMENT FOR SERVICES

We asked whether respondents would be able to pay a "fee for service" to help support services which meet their needs. Overall, most people told us **"depends"**:

| | SLRCs | ABE Dir | Other/st | Other/loc | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 6 (7%) |
| No | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 18 (22%) |
| Depends | 18 | 14 | 7 | 14 | 53 (65%) |
| TOTAL RESPONDENTS | 27 | 22 | 13 | 20 | 82 (100%) |

Those who answered "depends" were asked on what. Responses centered around three major factors:

- availability of funding
- the form of the new legislation (and in particular how much "discretionary" funding is available to state directors, and whether SLRCs are funded)
- whether the services meet their needs

## REACTIONS TO "THE PLAN"

Respondents were given an outline of a draft plan developed by the RRI Working Group, and asked to respond with their likes, reservations, questions, and ideas for what should be changed. Many people expressed their liking for the overall concept, and especially the idea of collaboration and learning between states.

**Likes**: major areas which respondents liked were:

- Collaboration and sharing of resources, not reinventing the wheel;
- Potential for cost savings
- Ability to meet resource needs not now being met;
- Multi-year funding;
- Leveraging of other resources;
- Benefits for a broad constituency, in particular rural areas.

## The Players

Respondents were asked both who the major players in regional collaborative projects should be, and also who should be fiscal agents. Respondents generally expected the players to include a variety of agencies and organizations, with a majority of all respondent groups naming SLRCs, State Education Agencies, and non-profit State organizations. Other state agencies were named by SLRCs and state ABE directors, and local programs more by local programs themselves. Nevertheless, a good case can be made for an open process involving all kinds of organizations.

| Major Players | SLRCs | ABE Dir | Other/st | Other/loc | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SLRCs | 23 | 19 | 11 | 14 | 67 (82%) |
| State Education Agencies | 20 | 18 | 10 | 12 | 60 (73%) |
| Nonprofit State Organizations | 21 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 57 (70%) |
| Local Programs | 13 | 12 | 8 | 16 | 49 (60%) |
| Other State Agencies | 16 | 14 | 10 | 9 | 49 (60%) |
| Others (e.g. universities, nonprofits) | 15 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 40 (49%) |
| TOTAL RESPONDENTS | 27 | 22 | 13 | 20 | 82 (100%) |

| Fiscal agents/primary applicants | SLRCs | ABE Dir | Other/st | Other/loc | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SLRCs Only | 11 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 17 (21%) |
| State Education Agencies | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 6 (6%) |
| SLRCs and SEAs Together | 5 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 9 (11%) |
| Any State Level Organization | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 (5%) |
| Not Restricted | 7 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 32 (39%) |
| TOTAL RESPONDENTS | 27 | 22 | 13 | 20 | 82 (100%) |

When it comes to the primary applicant or fiscal agent, there is much less agreement among respondents. Fewer than half the SLRC directors favored SLRCs only as fiscal agents, although several others suggested SLRCs and state education agencies in partnership should apply. State ABE directors were spread over several categories, and the closest to agreement (though not a majority) was for non-restricted applications.

## Geography vs. Theme-based Collaborations

The draft plan proposed two kinds of pilot projects to be tested and evaluated over a several year period: one based on geographic regions (contiguous states agreeing to work together and share resources); and one not restricted geographically, but in which multiple states would agree to work together around a common theme. Respondents were asked whether they favored one of these kinds of pilot over another.

A clear majority favored trying both kinds of pilot projects. Concerns about geography were mentioned by a few of the local program respondents, but on the whole most people are willing to try different approaches and to evaluate over time.

| | SLRCs | ABE Dir | Other/st | Other/loc | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Geography-Based | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 10 (12%) |
| Theme-Based | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 (5%) |
| Both | 17 | 12 | 7 | 6 | 42 (51%) |
| Other Answer / Uncertain | 2 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 11 (13%) |
| TOTAL RESPONDENTS | 27 | 22 | 13 | 20 | 82 (100%) |

A number of people pointed out the geography restricts any "people-moving" activities, such as training. However, many also value being able to collaborate with other states who share similar concerns and issues.

March 14-17, 1996 Phoenix

# RRI Working Group Agenda

Day One:

- Review RRI Purpose
- Overview of Nashville Accomplishments
- Introduce and Review Survey
- Report/Discussion
- Input from New Members to Group

Day Two:

- Remarks/Discussion on Context of Federal/State Changes
- Funding Issues and Mechanisms
- Accountability and Equity Issues
- Essential Components of Region Model: structure, content, collaboration, core funding level
- Develop Recommendations
- Essential Components of an Action Plan

Day Three:

- Specifics of Action Plan
- Essential Components of an RFP
- Final Draft and Recommendations
- Ideas for Dissemination

The second RRI Working Group meeting had two purposes:

1. develop recommendations for NIFL, the U.S. Department of Education, and the field, regarding the feasibility and effectiveness of regional resource sharing, and
2. to develop an action plan of next steps to be taken to implement its recommendations.

Members were to leave the meeting with a draft, which would be further refined and developed by Maureen Ambrose and Juliet Merrifield, in consultation with the Core Work Group.

In order to develop the recommendations we:

- reviewed input from the field (the RRI survey);
- assessed strengths and weaknesses of regional resource sharing;
- agreed on essential components for regional resource sharing in order for it to be feasible and effective, including:
- structure (how it would be set up)
- content (what would it do)
- collaboration (who would need to be players)
- funding level (what core funding would be needed)
- recommendations for what a regional resource initiative would look like, what it could (and could not) do.

In order to develop the action plan we:

- developed time frames for implementation;
- identified potential funding sources and how to approach them;
- identified next steps in staged implementation process;
- identified top priority steps (without which the rest of the process cannot happen).

On March 15, the major business was to develop recommendations, including agreeing on essential components for regional resource sharing.

On March 16, we completed work on the recommendations, and focused most of our time on developing a realistic and doable action plan.



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# Regional Resource Initiative Work Group

## Summary Notes
## March 14-16, 1996
## Phoenix, AZ

### Day One:

March 14 at 4:00, the second meeting of the Regional Resource Initiative Work Group opened with introductions and welcoming remarks from Maureen Ambrose and Gary Eyre. Following introductions of each work group member, Gary Eyre gave his perspective on a regional focus for Arizona and the particular directions it might take: distance learning, Native American adult education, NAFTA, newsletter publication, conferences, showcasing best practices, teacher exchanges, evaluation of adult education services, technical assistance, and the like. Maureen reiterated the RRI purpose for those who did not attend the Nashville meeting in January. Each work group member received the Survey Report in the mail, so remarks made to introduce the document were brief. Work Group members were invited to comment on the findings. This session ended with a discussion of the scope of the work to follow on Friday and Saturday.

### Days Two and Three:

Highlights

Early in the meeting, the Work Group agreed to name the Regional Resource Initiative "Alliances for Excellence". Throughout this report, Centers of Excellence, and Alliances for Excellence are synonymously used to describe the regional initiative.

The major accomplishments and recommendations of the Work Group activity are as follows:

# Alliances for Excellence

### Guiding Principles

- Prioritize and focus activities
- Build on existing strengths
- Add value, not cost
- Be flexible and sensitive to local and state needs
- Build in communication channels
- Use technology to reach customers when feasible
- Build in clear lines of accountability
- Build in performance measures
- Commit to collaboration(s) with other resource providers at local, state and national levels
- Establish measures to ensure equity
- Make decision making processes clear
- Fund for success
- Learn from experiences of existing models
- Think regionally / act locally
- Be customer driven

### Assumptions/Structure:

- Functional in nature vs. organizational
- Come from existing entities
- Demonstrate collaboration and coordination
- Proven track record in content area
- Customer driven accountability
- NIFL will coordinate Alliances
- NIFL will market Alliances nationally
- Coordination on all levels
- Three to five year funding
- Self sustaining after five years
- Functions are both geographic / nongeographic
- Advisory Board
- Can be one or more agencies

Specifically Alliances for Excellence will: (1) add value not cost, (2) be customer driven, (3) be inclusive and be judged by their results.

## The RRI Mission

Individual states have a need for services, knowledge, and expertise across a wide range of program functions. Therefore, it is proposed that regional specialized Resource Centers / Alliances could provide a means for sharing resources while also being economically efficient. RRI partnerships will create a mechanism to help translate national issues into state and local adult education strategies through:

- providing a means for sharing resources / sharing information and services among the partners
- developing innovative initiatives which improve the quality of services for adult learners
- broadening the resource base and bringing new players into funding and implementation.

### The Vision:

The basic skills and educational needs of adults in their roles as parents, workers and citizens will be met by a high quality delivery system. RRI will initiate and support collaborative partnerships that build on existing strengths to continuously improve the capacity of the field to meet the needs of adult learners.

### Vision particulars:

- Building capacity of the field to meet needs for adult learners
- Broadening the role of literacy in our changing world
- Tying adult literacy to national issues and context
- Coordinating and collaborating / all levels from national to local

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The Tasks:
In small group sessions, Work Group members were asked:
What would your ideas of Vision, Structure, Content, Collaboration and Core Funding look like?

## RRI Structure

Members: Kit Parker, Jean Stephens, Virginia Watson, Garland Hankins

The structure for the new Alliances for Excellence is a virtual structure based on function rather than a new structure or organization. The Alliances will be placed in existing centers / agencies which may be SLRCs or other resource centers for adult and basic literacy education operated by SEAs or CBOs. These existing centers will maintain their current governance structure (government, governor's office, college, university, or other). The new Alliances would be funded by NIFL, DOE, Private Foundations and / or other sources. The following guidelines or assumptions clarify the proposed structure.

- Alliances are functional in nature, versus organizational
- Alliances will have demonstrated collaboration / coordination in the past with the adult education field (with key players)
- Alliances will have a proven tack record in the content area they are selected to excel in and will be composed of more than one center / agency
- Alliances may coordinate functions in a geographic region or non geographic / theme region
- Accountability is required on two levels 1) funder requirements; 2) market / customer use
- A customer driven accountability is based on the concept that a "good product" will be bought or used by the customers.

It is proposed that the Alliances be funded for three to five years. The alliances will be building upon existing expertise and will use the funding to develop partnerships, further develop services / products and market these. The end of the funding period will bring customer driven accountability and will deter

mine whether services or the product should continue and be on a self supporting basis. There should be an advisory board to oversee the Alliances. There should be a national coordinating focus by NIFL or the initial major funder(s) The funder would also be responsible for marketing the alliances and their services nationally.

## CONTENT

Members: Todd Evans, Silja Kallenbach, Maureen Ambrose, Chris Zacharides, Sandy Robinson

The group defined content by what regional centers could do better than individual states and by looking at what only states can do. Neither was productive. We concluded that answers to those questions should

be defined by the particular states or groups of states that come together on a proposal. It is the resource needs of the particular group which comes together that defines whether a regional approach is more effective. The members of this group then searched for a new angle to present our ideas. What follows is our thought process.

Professional Development and Training

Possible ways to do it:

- Inquiry
- Study groups
- Distance education
- Workshops with structured follow up
- Conferences, institutes, academies, courses

Examples of Topics:

- Learning Disabilities
- Evaluation
- Math, ESOL, etc.
- Fund Development
- Political issues and the economics of literacy
- Teaching methods
- Program performance and accountability systems

Information -Sharing

Possible ways to do it:

- Clearinghouse
- Distance education
- Conferences, meetings

- Publications, videos
- Electronics

Examples of Topics:

- Public policy
- All emerging issues in adult education, training, and literacy

## COLLABORATION

Group Members: Jim Bowling, Sheila Rosenberg, Mary Siedow, and George Spicely

The success of RRIs will depend in large measure on the presence of truly collaborative efforts among partners. Too often collaboration is assumed rather than consciously developed by partners in projects. Recognizing that collaboration will not occur without specific effort by partners, the small group framed

its discussion around the question: "In the context of RRI, successful collaboration will require...." We agreed that much of the success of collaborative results from upfront action and commitment, elements of which include: In the context of RRI, Effecting successful collaboration will require

- Get clear and upfront about interests, expectations
- Identify stakeholders, (current and potential) their role and capacity
- Share information, communication on an on-going, planned basis
- Identify benefits to partners stakeholders/clients
- Gain mutual understanding of respective program purpose and/or regulations
- Share individual intentions, goals, and expectations
- Get clear on what we're going to do
- Develop joint dissemination plan
- Identify barriers and contingencies
- Develop common/shared agenda
- Develop project management strategies, include schedules
- Develop evaluation plan as part of program management
- Use interagency approach to planning
- Develop consensus on approaches/outcomes
- Have sincere verbal commitment
- Invest authority in group
- Assemble formal written agreements (memorandum of understanding)
- Value all partners' expertise
- Conduct joint marketing and PR strategies
- Share responsibility and give credit to stakeholders
- Invest authority in group

## (Marketing) Leadership and Coordination

Group Members: Todd Evans, Jim Bowling Virginia Watson, Andy Hartman, Sandy Robinson, Sheila Rosenberg

There is a need to create public awareness of Alliances for Excellence to attract potential applicants, States, Sate Literacy Resource Centers. We need different marketing strategies for different groups, e.g. potential funders and practitioners. The coordinating committee members will market the concept to the field. It is advised that a marketing expert be hired.

Andy: "For the next three years approximately $75m is available for technical assistance and training. Who gets it could include the Regional Resource Initiative".
George: "United States Department of Education could fund the Regional Resource Initiative/Alliances for Excellence under certain circumstances".

**The Work Group proposed a coordinating committee to help "market" the concept to the field and provide overall leadership. There is need for a single point of contact, for a group to present the concept and to market to funders; to applicants/partners, and to potential funders.**

## Funding

Group Members: Kit Parker, Steve Nunes, Juliet Merrifield, George Spicely, Garland Hankins, Chris Zacharides

Proposed core funding for projects per year is $300,000. Projects would likely receive a range for funding at $50,000 to $100,000 per project. The project becomes self sustaining within five years. Strategic planning for financial resource development is required. The funding source will shape the project.

A final issue was raised regarding permanance. What will ensure the sustainability of the initiative? The current models represent and generate a replicable model. These have more permanence than the particular project.

Question: should students be customers to be served directly? The large group decided that direct instruction would be appropriate only as part of a short term model.

We clarified an assumption that this initiative is not predicated on the existence of SLRCs. It cannot replace SLRCs or the $7M worth of functions fostered under SLRCs. We debated whether or not to supply concrete examples of what the RRI would look like in practice. In the end we decided to refer and defer

to the recommendations made by respondents to the survey. Ultimately we grouped the recommendations under three categories: 1) professional development and training and 2) information sharing, 3) innovative approaches to a problem. The RRI/work group would not define the topics/applicants will choose. A suggestion was made to select topics that are fundable and marketable. Group decided against this. Instead of defining content areas we decided to define guidelines for anyone proposing a project under any content area.

Case Studies: based on reality or fiction, samples bring the idea to life for the reader of the proposal: 1) accountability work ( non regional ) by Juliet Merrifield; existing regional or new regional, by Silja Kallenbach from the New England experience. Dr. Gary Eyre's sample is a Regional Resource Initiative for Arizona and Western region partners. These should show intent, but will not be restrictive. Each will show clearly how a regional approach can be more efficient than each state doing things alone.

Criteria for Selection: measurable impact, meets a documented need, regional collaboration, approach is more effective than doing it another way, have applicability outside RRI; sustainability,( some will be market driven).

Note: this is a way of addressing national policy issues. Grants should not go to projects which only affect small communities. Could be replicated elsewhere and is of national importance. Demonstrate a model, or effective process.

## Action Plan/Development

Steps:
Draft Report to work group, approve
Report to NIFL which includes the surveys, proceedings of meetings, recommendations, and abstracts on sample alliances.
Plan: request for funding for developmental stage using this group to continue (perhaps with an appointed consultant and utilization of current Work Group.) Please refer to the Executive Summary and pages 4 and 5 for the recommended Action Plan.

# Sample Alliances for Excellence

(Case Studies)

# Scenario for an Alliance for Literacy Excellence in Performance Management

by Juliet Merrifield, Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee

Four states share interests in performance management, program quality and program improvement. The states are not geographically contiguous, although all are in the East and within a day's drive of each other. They vary culturally and politically, but all are majority rural, all have mountainous areas as well as farming areas, and all have populations which are majority white and African-American, with small (but growing) numbers of other racial and ethnic groups.

The four states have developed different areas of expertise in their adult education and literacy programs:

- Alpha has worked hard over the last three years on a performance management system, including developing an interagency technology system to track student outcomes and generate reports for stakeholders.
- Beta has put a great deal of effort into its program quality work, has developed indicators and measures of program quality, and trained state staff and peer evaluators in using this system.
- Kappa has focused primarily on assessment, has had a strong interest in authentic assessment including portfolios, and has developed standards which enable portfolios to generate statistical reporting on learner progress.
- Delta has made special efforts to generate close working relationships between ABE and CBOs and volunteer literacy groups. They have developed joint training, and have focused on equitable access to funding. Their particular interest at this time is in program management and continuous improvement, and they are in process of developing training in this area.

The four state ABE directors talk at a national meeting about exploring a partnership in which each contributes what it knows, and each state learns from the others. The state directors go home and discuss the possibilities for a partnership with other key stakeholders in their states (which include CBO/volunteer literacy groups, other state agencies in Labor and Human Services, Governor's staffs, university-based researchers, and their SLRCs). The decision is made in each state to go the next step.

A two-day retreat is convened which brings together major players from the four states. They talk about what their states have to offer and what they want to gain. They talk about differences and similarities in their culture, in their adult education structure, and in their experiences. They develop an outline for a plan.

Recognizing the importance of clarifying everyone's agendas, understanding cultures, working through differences, the states agree to rotate planning meetings among the four locations, and to include visits to local programs.

In their proposal for ALE funding, the states outline their two-year initial plan:

1. Convene a three day Institute for state level agencies on developing performance measurement systems, facilitated by Alpha. The other three states want to learn as much from the process as from the end product which Alpha has developed, in order to develop systems appropriate to the needs of their own states. Alpha agrees to provide follow-up technical assistance as the states work through this process, and staff from Alpha will make several visits a year to the other states.

2. Design and carry out a series of two workshops for program evaluators, held separately in the four states, and facilitated by Beta. Beta staff will work with a team of state staff and program directors in each state to plan the workshops, and tailor the training to each state's program quality indicators and measures. If requested, Beta staff will be available to provide individual technical assistance in the other states.

3. Three states will convene a study group in each state on learner assessment, and Kappa staff will design study questions and provide study materials for these groups. The states want to review their current assessment procedures, learn more about authentic assessment, and plan ways to begin to introduce alternative assessment into their systems. The study groups will include state level staff, local program directors, and teachers. Each study group will meet at least six times over a 12 month period. Kappa staff agree to meet with the study groups if requested.

4. Delta agrees to hold a workshop for state agency staff and selected CBO/volunteer literacy organizations from the other three sites on ensuring CBO and volunteer literacy involvement in the other activities in their states. The CBO/volunteer literacy organization leaders from Delta also agree to hold training sessions in each of the other three states for their CBO and volunteer literacy groups on developing closer relationships with ABE.

The states leave open the plan for continuing work in subsequent years, in part to be flexible to new policy developments at state and national levels, in part to enable continuing work to build on and grow out of these initial efforts. They request funding for a coordinator, who will be attached to one of the SLRCs, and commit to contribute funding for their own personnel time and travel expenses.

## Example of Regional Collaboration: New England Literacy Resource Center Learning Disabilities and Differences Kit

by Silja Kallenbach, World Education, New England Literacy Resource Center

In the fall of 1994 the New England states agreed to conduct a staff development needs assessment the results of which would inform the workplan development of the newly established New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC). Each state designed and implemented its own needs assessment process. Most states conducted surveys, but some states convened focus groups. One state conducted targeted interviews with practitioners at a statewide ABE conference. The results of this needs assessment process were shared at a day-long meeting to which each state sent two or more representatives.

Learning disabilities emerged as the number one staff development need expressed by practitioners in all New England states. In response, NELRC, which is staffed by one full time coordinator, convened an LD work group of adult educators from the six New England states. Each of NELRC's Affiliated State Literacy Resource Centers recruited two or more practitioners to serve on the work group. Each of these practitioners had some background in learning disabilities, and most importantly, a strong interest in learning more and participating in the group. They received no extra compensation for their time, but their travel was reimbursed by the SLRC.

The LD work group began by learning more about each state's strengths and needs regarding staff development on LD. They also defined the purpose of the work group. They then brainstormed ideas for how they might best respond to the adult educators' stated interest in staff development on learning

disabilities. The ideas included documenting and sharing best practices; organizing a New England conference on LD and adults; organizing teacher sharing groups on LD in each state; researching ESL and LD materials; doing advocacy with employers on behalf of LD adults; developing workshops on LD; and developing a teacher resource kit on LD.

The idea to develop a Teacher Resource Kit on Learning Disabilities and Differences won the most votes from the work group members. We were drawn to the Kit approach because it is a mobile resource that would reach practitioners even in more remote areas where other forms of staff development are scare. It was a concrete products that we could share with other educators. Furthermore, the Kit felt like a doable idea given limitations of time and other resources.

The idea of a teacher resource kit was new for most people, but we drew on the experience of Massachusetts that already had teacher resource kits on other topics such as science, AIDS and Basic Literacy. One Massachusetts regional literacy resource center had organized all of their LD materials into a Kit format, but they had not weeded out anything or looked for additional materials. The NELRC LD work group decided to begin by reviewing the contents of this Kit. In addition, all members brought their favorite LD teaching resources to the meetings.

We decided that the Kit should be organized into three sections: Awareness, Assessment and Teaching Strategies. Sub-committees corresponding to these sections them undertook an extensive review process of publications and videos. People did most of the actual reading and review on their own time. Each sub-committee then proposed the contents for their section and a way to organize it. The committees reviewed each other's recommendations and made suggestions. All of this involved a fair amount of friendly debate. The Kit's contents came to reflect not only the considered opinions of members of the LD Work Group, but also our budgetary constraints. Most of the materials that were included were ones that we had found valuable in our work with students who have learning differences. In addition, we asked an outside expert to review the Kit. Almost a year later, we felt we had a product to pilot. Now we needed a plan for how to present and market it.

We realized that it was important to make clear that the goal of the workshop was not staff development in learning disabilities but to introduce people to the Kit. We proceeded to develop different versions of an interactive workshop which two members of the work group agreed to pilot with their co-workers. Our plan was that the work group members would become peer trainers in their individual states. NELRC then compiled a set number of kits for each state and was reimbursed for the materials by the SLRCs. That done, the work group was ready to launch the Kit.

Our outreach methods included an article in each state's ABE newsletter, a mailing of flyers to literacy programs in the region, and workshops at state ABE conference. Individual programs could then contact their State Literacy Resource Center to request to borrow the Kit for four weeks. In most states, a part of the borrowing agreement was for the program staff to participate in an introductory workshop on site presented by a member of the LD work group.

Throughout the Kit development process both the project (NELRC) coordinator and individual work group members briefed the State Literacy Resource Centers and other stakeholders on their progress.

The Kit has been extremely well received by New England practitioners. It is clearly filling a real need for accessible teaching resources. There are now 16 LD Kits in circulation throughout the region.

## National/Regional/Single Resource Center Initiatives

by Gary A. Eyre, Arizona Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and GED Testing Services

The vitality of resource centers together or alone are only as strong as the services and programs they can provide to teachers, administrators and the public/private sector. There are numerous initiatives which resource centers could provide. Three immediate areas which need to be addressed are -

ONE The idea of academic standards, set at a national level and implemented nation wide, has gained political currency since the early 1990's. The business of setting academic standards is getting complicated. While virtually everyone including adult educators now agree that students need to work toward cohesive world class standards, educators and policy makers disagree on who should implement and enforce them.

There are politics associated with standards. Creating, advocating and using standards point to new challenges in adapting national standards to state and local levels. If there is to be national standards, adult educators need to be part of this growing academic blueprint. Standards are a necessary means for assuring that all students including children, youth and adults master similar transferable skills and have equal footing in a global economy.

No one should be more entrusted with setting educational standards for adults than professionally trained adult educators. There is no question that meaningful standards will require changes in practice and attitudes. Just as teachers must exhibit their will to set high standards and hold adult students to them, so must administrators in our adult education programs.

Adult education learning centers must find the will to eliminate some of the taken-for-granted choices in curriculum and replace them with new learning styles and assessment procedures.

If adult education is to be part of the standards movement, we must examine the standards we hope to achieve in the realm of our curriculum. Standards are essential both for equal opportunity and excellence. Adult educators cannot avoid the issue. We cannot afford to abandon our efforts to develop and implement state standards for all students.

What is the role of resource centers in helping adult educators to achieve the purposes we set as goals and standards for education? State Literacy Resource Centers might address academic standards across state lines through "Alliances for Excellence". Research, conferences and teleconferences, curriculum development, evaluation methods, and participation in the evaluation process might be conducted by state teams convened by SLRCs.

TWO In the great Southwest and the Mexican border states, there is a need to examine the role adult education should and can play in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

For adult educators there is an opportunity to raise our awareness about the cultural and social make-up of our sister states in Mexico. Teacher exchanges and curriculum material sharing are in order.

As large numbers of adults make the transition from a Spanish language to English usage (listening - speaking - writing) it is increasingly important that adult education providers understand the learning styles of our Hispanic students. We can learn sound and productive learning practices from our Mexico colleagues. Perhaps a new Estados Unidos/ Mexico Border Training Project through the U.S. Department of Education is in order. Alliances for Excellence would be an excellent vehicle for implementing the sharing of resources and expertise.

The purpose of such a project would be to assist departments of education in facilitating the planning and implementation of cooperative activities among American and Mexican adult educators in order to improve English as a second language, workplace education, instructor training, and other program services in both Countries and to fulfill the commitments made by the NAFTA agreement.

Third Sweeping across American is a new thrust for providing alternative learning opportunities for children and adults. New delivery systems are required whether it be for family literacy, charter schools, alternative secondary diplomas, home schooling, self directed learning or private tutorial programs. here is a need for adult educators to be aware of opportunities to be part of these new learning environments.

Regional Resource centers could be the information bank for this movement and a facilitator of research on adult education's role in these alternative educational delivery systems. One major concern is the credentialling process for clients completing non-traditional learning. What assessment might be used to validate competencies and what certificates, licenses or credential could be issued and acceptable to employers, post-secondary educational institutions, the military, trade schools, etc. can be the work of Alliances for Excellence.

If alternative delivery systems to the traditional school are part of educational reform, we must devise a system of education that combines the educational advantages of school independence with the economic advantages of school districts, community colleges or community based organizations.